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Good Day Chairpersons and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Bonnie Meyers, and I am submitting this testimony in opposition to THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS. In his proposal, the Governor seeks to reduce funding for the Services for Persons with Disabilities line item, which includes the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut, by 20%.

I currently work as the Director of Programs and Services at the Brain Injury Alliance of CT. I have worked within the field of brain injury for over 25 years. The long-term consequences and devastation of brain injury is not easily conveyed with words – simply put - it has the potential to affect all aspects of an individual's life – and those that love and care for the individual as well. It turns lives upside down, and many people struggle for the rest of their lives. A large majority of people with moderate to severe brain injury require life-long support, and even the simplest life activities and routines become challenging and difficult to navigate. This is where the Brain Injury Alliance of CT steps in. This is where we make a difference. Our organization is one-of-a-kind, unique, and serves for many as a “life-line” for resources, support, and linkage with services. We constantly receive feedback from survivors, family/caregivers and professionals that we were the only ones who answered that phone call on their first attempt; We were the only ones who took the time to respond to all of their questions and needs; We were the ones who were there for us, throughout a week, a month, or years. For so many, we provide the crucial support and guidance that they have not been able to find elsewhere. Our services are vital, and cannot be lost to those who truly need them most.

- For 35 years, BIAC has received an operating grant from the Department of Social Services to provide entirely free resources and supports which the State is unable to provide.
- No one else does what BIAC does, including the Department of Social Services (DSS), which is why DSS contracts with BIAC to provide the many essential services that it is not equipped to offer. BIAC meets the needs of the State's brain injury survivors on behalf of DSS as efficiently as it does effectively.
- If BIAC is no longer able to provide these services, DSS would no longer have the mechanism to provide these essential services required as part of the ABI Medicaid Waiver and needed for compliance with CMS. BIAC's services only cost the state \$104,228 last year.

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- BIAC provides all services at a fraction of what it would cost DSS to provide these services.
- BIAC's work on behalf of DSS reduces the brain injury-related workload at DSS.
- BIAC provides critical training and consultation to most of the State key agencies- including DSS, VA, DCF, DPH, DOE, DOC, DMHAS, DDS, and BRS.

I understand the dire fiscal state of affairs in CT at this time, and I know that financial prudence and restraint is a high urgent priority. You have very difficult decisions to make in regards to appropriations of very limited resources, where resources are already strained. I ask, however, that you consider the needs of our most vulnerable CT citizens. It is essential and absolutely necessary that BIAC continue to have the funding available to maintain our services to those who desperately need them. Every single day, people reach out to us from all areas of the state, in need of support, guidance, and linkage with life-saving services and programs.

A 20% reduction in funding would severely impact BIAC and the services they provide to the community. Please maintain funding for the Services for Persons with Disabilities line so that BIAC can be there for those who need them most. I appreciate all the support you have given us in the past and ask for your continued support. For so many, your ongoing support and decisions in this regard will make THE difference to countless numbers of people throughout CT.

Respectfully,

Bonnie Meyers MS CRC CBIST
Vernon, CT